

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

Policy reviewed: September 2024

Next review: September 2025

This document will remain valid until the end of the academic year 2024-25

Roles of Key staff involved in the policy	Name(s)
Head of Learning Support/SENCo	Steven Morris
SENCo line manager (Senior leader)	Sarah Proudlove
Head of Centre	Sarah Proudlove
Assessor(s)	Steven Morris
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Steven Morris and Angela Singh

What are Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments?

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment. They allow candidates with **specific needs**, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a **substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; **and**
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Palmers Green High School has a written record which clearly shows the Centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its 'obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements'.

This policy is held by the SENCo alongside the individual files of each access arrangements candidate. Each file contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Although each candidate will have an electronic folder in the IN section the of the School's Staff Shared drive which contains documents pertaining to all aspects of that pupil's time at the School and the SEND and Learning Support provision given, the main folder for holding all of the essential information for each access arrangements candidate is held in hard copy in the SEND Office.

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

General principles

The principles for the Centre to consider are detailed in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*. These include:

- The purpose of an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.
- The Head of Learning Support/SENCo, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.
- Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course wherever possible.
- Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.
- The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the Centre.
- The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination.

PGHS Examinations Policy

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Examinations Policy which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams. Two key sections relevant to this policy have been inserted below:

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 requires a Centre to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. Reasonable adjustments such as the use of laptops, coloured or modified examination papers with a larger font can be applied for and put in place to reduce the disadvantage that would be experienced by a disabled candidate taking their examinations. There is adequate wheelchair accessibility to the examination hall and spacing between examination desks. Seating is provided outside of the examination hall for candidates who need or are granted supervised rest breaks.

Access arrangements, special educational needs and disabilities

The Centre agrees to ensure that access arrangements and special consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law and recognises its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of The Equality Act 2010. This includes a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the Centre provides to disabled candidates. *The PGHS Special Educational Needs & Disability policy and the PGHS policy for Access Arrangements in Public Examination* set out how the Centre seeks to comply with The Equality Act 2010 and fully support disabled candidates. These policies can be found in the Staff Shared Area policy folder.

The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor appointed by the Head of Centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*. The School's main assessor is the Head of Learning Support/SENCo, who gained a Level 7 qualification in assessment in July 2020.

The qualifications of the current SENDCo / assessor:

Post Graduate Certificate in Education: Autism Studies
Level 5 Dyslexia Intervention Certificate and BDA Accredited Teacher Status
Post Graduate Award of Proficiency in Assessment for Access Arrangements (Level 7)
Post Graduate Certificate in SEND (Level 7)
Post Graduate Certificate of Education (Level 7) and Qualified Teacher Status
M.A (Cantab) in English Literature

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the Centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

In appointing an access arrangements assessor, the Head of Centre will appoint one of the following:

- An access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. Courses which are accredited at AMBDA or APC Level would meet this requirement, as would post-graduate courses at or equivalent to Level 7 which provide a qualification in access arrangements assessment OR
- A specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by BDA, the Dyslexia Guild or Patoss and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments OR
- An appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments.

An access arrangements assessor must have successfully completed a postgraduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, which includes training in all of the following:

- the theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve;
- raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles and age equivalent scores;
- the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals;
- the appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested;
- the objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading comprehension, reading speed and spelling. Appropriate methods of assessing writing skills, including speed;
- the appropriate selection and objective use of tests of cognitive skills;
- the ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional.

The Head of Centre and the Head of Learning Support will ensure that the assessor has:

- a thorough understanding of the current edition of *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved;

- is familiar with the Equality Act 2010 (although it is not their role to determine what is a 'reasonable adjustment', but rather to help identify access arrangements that might assist the candidate in examinations and assessments and are thus potentially reasonable adjustments);
- holds an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties, or is an HCPC registered psychologist.

As the current Head of Learning Support/SENCo is also the school's assessor, evidence of his qualifications is located in both the SEND Office and the Head's office. In order to provide evidence of his continuing and thorough understanding of the current edition of *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved, the Head of Learning Support/SENCo undertakes annual training regarding changes to the rules, regulations and procedures for that academic year.

Where the Centre's assessor is not able to provide the assessment evidence required, for example in the case of an application for extra time for a candidate with a social, emotional and mental health difficulty such as ADHD, the Head of Learning Support will liaise with the relevant and suitably qualified health professional as part of the process of gathering and collating the evidence specified in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The appointment of the assessor is reported in the relevant section of the Access Arrangements Online in order to confirm their status, and evidence of professional qualifications is held in both the SEND and the Head's office.

The current assessor is Steven Morris (Head of Learning Support and SENCo since September 2019) who was appointed as the school's assessor in July 2020.

Painting a 'holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working

All children on the School's SEND register have an Individual Action plan in place, a copy of which is held in each child's electronic folder in the Staff Shared drive/IN/Individual Pupils, along with other supporting evidence. Where such documentation is historic, a hard copy only is securely stored in an individual folder in the lockable cabinet in the SEND Office.

Psychometric test papers are also stored in the individual folders in this cabinet.

The Head of Learning Support/SENCo will use the following evidence to support the painting of a holistic picture of need:

- The Individual Action Plan, which outlines the key areas of need, classroom adjustments and current access arrangements in the Centre
- Previous assessments conducted in School
- Any Externally Commissioned Specialist Reports
- Copies of emails about the candidate's difficulties (for example communication between the school and home)

- Evidence from Subject Teachers detailing the pupil's difficulties in the subject and confirming their normal way of working in the Centre.

Processing Access Arrangements and Adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for Centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* -Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments and Modified papers).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging into one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

The Head of Learning Support/SENCo is responsible for making, submitting and keeping records of all access arrangements online applications.

Under normal circumstances, these will be processed during the first term of Year 10 for all candidates after the completion of assessments, the completion of Form 8 and the collation of the necessary supporting evidence.

All documentation in support of the application (including a printed copy of the approval and the signed JCQ Data Protection Notice) is kept in hard copy in an individual folder for each candidate. These folders are kept in a year group file in the SEND Office, ready for presentation during a JCQ Inspection.

Where approval is not initially granted, the Head of Learning Support will follow the relevant procedure for awarding body referrals.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

For Centre delegated arrangements such as the use of rest breaks, a prompter or a reading pen, a short file note outlining the key area of need, and supporting evidence, will be kept in the candidate's folder in the SEND Office (it will also be reported as a part of their Individual Action plan).

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An examination candidate may be approved for the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the Centre and be in line with the current PGHS Word Processor Policy.

The Centre's Word Processing Policy is available in hard copy in the SEND Office (at the front of the Access Arrangements Folder for Candidates) and electronically.

Palmer's Green High School will provide a laptop/word processor/tablet with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is seen as their normal way of working within the school and is appropriate to their needs.

Candidates who would benefit from the use of a laptop/word processor/tablet, for example, where quality of language significantly improves as a result of using a word processor due to problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand, may be eligible to use one.

The use of a laptop/word processor/tablet must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the school and be appropriate to the candidate's needs.

In summary, a candidate with:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand or
- poor handwriting

may benefit from using a laptop/word processor/tablet in their examinations, this list is not exhaustive.

It is acceptable for candidates using a word processor in an examination to type certain answers, i.e., those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers.

Separate Invigilation Policy

A decision where an examination candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the Centre will be made by the Head of Learning Support/SENCo, in consultation with the Exams Officer, the Head of Centre and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, if appropriate.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect **and**
- the candidate's normal way of working within the Centre

The school's criteria for separate invigilation are as follows:

- As part of an access arrangement which is the candidate's usual way of working, and for which the necessary approval has been granted, such as the use of a computer reader or a scribe;
- As part of a Centre delegated access arrangement which is the candidate's usual way of working, such as reading aloud or rest breaks.
- As part of special arrangements in place as the result of an acute mental health or physical condition, for which permission has been sought from JCQ as required.